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Silbereisen, Rainer K.; Tomasik, Martin J.

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Development as Action in Changing Contexts: Perspectives from Six Countries

Rainer K. Silbereisen & Martin J. Tomasik [*]

Abstract: *»Entwicklung als Handlung im Kontext: Perspektiven aus sechs Ländern«*. This paper reviews five recent contributions that empirically investigate the interaction between changing socio-historical contexts and individual adaptation and development. The contributions by John Bynner, Rand Conger and colleagues, Cigdem Kagitcibasi, Jungsik Kim and colleagues and Ingrid Schoon are discussed against the backdrop of a generic model of social change and human development. It is argued that research on social change has to consider the larger political and social context and needs to identify and to study conditions that represent the processes of macro-micro-interaction. Such research will not only enrich the scientific inquiry in this field and promote theorizing about development-in-context, but also is of relevance for social policies in times of rapid social change.

Keywords: cohort study, context, demands, German reunification, globalization, human development, political transformation, social change, cross-cultural comparison.

Human Development has always been conceived as brought about by an ongoing interaction between biological propositions and ecological constraints. Rather new, however, is the idea that this interaction runs both ways, from the behaviour-in-ecology to the various levels of our biological existence, and vice versa. Recently, biological pathways have received more and more attention due to the insights into the role of genetic variations in, for instance, the stress-responding system (e.g., Armbruster, Müller, Moser, Lesch, Brocke, & Kirschbaum, 2009), but there is also a revitalization of research on the role of contexts in human development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2000) distinction of various levels of contexts reflecting their distance to the micro system, which

[*] Address all communications to: Rainer K. Silbereisen and Martin J. Tomasik, Friedrich Schiller University, Center for Applied Developmental Science and Department of Developmental Psychology, Am Steiger 3/1, 07743 Jena, Germany;
e-mail: rainer.silbereisen@uni-jena.de, martin.tomasik@uni-jena.de.
Author's Note: The preparation of this article was supported by a grant from the German Research Foundation (research project "Psychosocial Resources and Coping with Social Change" as part of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 580) and by the Jacobs Foundation. Our special gratitude goes to Andreas Beelmann, Franz J. Neyer, and Peter Noack from the University of Jena who agreed to discuss some of the presentations during the conference from their own research perspective and thus gave a fresh, complementary view on the topics presented. We would also like to thank Katrin Müller and Anja Möhring for their engaged organizational support before, during, and after the conference.

comprised parents and their offspring, instigated research on the embeddedness of psychosocial development in the life spheres of other individuals. Moreover, somewhat paradoxically, the role of the individuals as active agents of their own development became prominent parallel to the interest in genetic propensities (e.g., Lerner, Theokas, & Jelicic, 2005). What some have called "development-as-action-in-context" (Silbereisen, Eyferth, & Rudinger, 1986) is a program of research aiming at a better understanding of how people negotiate the opportunities provided by contexts in pursuing age-typical developmental tasks, such as the development of appropriate orientations and skills relevant to the fulfilment of roles in work and social relationships.

Past research on contexts addressed either more of proximal ones, such as the family or peer group, which were analyzed according to a large number of developmentally relevant dimensions and distinctions, or tackled more distal contexts. In the latter case, most researchers were satisfied by analyzing the role of contexts at face value, that is, without delineating the psychologically relevant dimensions. By comparing developmental trajectories as a function of social and economic status, for instance, it is not clear which processes actually influence development – is it the better cognitive stimulation by highly educated parents, or is it the provision of better toys by more affluent families, or is it still another dimension, such as the more structured household organization?

Research on differences between cultures seemingly represents an exception from the approach via distal contexts, because a rich repertoire of psychological dimensions exists with which to distinguish cultures, such as the preferred level of relatedness versus autonomy in intergenerational relationships. With few exceptions (e.g., Kagitcibasi, 1985), however, the other part of the equation, intraindividual changes as a consequence of differences and change in cultural contexts, only recently came into focus (Greenfield, 2009). This cannot be attributed to the lack of theoretical concepts. Ecological approaches to psychosocial adaptation have been proposed as early as half a century ago by, for instance, Berry (1996), who studied differences in perceptual task demands between hunting and agricultural societies. Further, since the introduction of the chronosystem by Bronfenbrenner (1979), developmental science is aware that it is not only the reciprocal interaction between the different ecological contexts that shape individual development but also their change over time. However, as the experimental simulation of large scale social change affecting several ecological contexts simultaneously was difficult (or even impossible), the lack of research in this area can probably be attributed to missing opportunities in terms of adequate natural experiments.

In a sense, it is no exaggeration therefore to claim that radical change of political systems during the 1990s was a revelation concerning the potential role of social change for the psychosocial development of those, young and old, who were affected. The uniqueness of the situation with regard to the recent

research agenda can be characterized in just a few points. First, as the case of German unification shows, the changing societal characteristics were easy to pinpoint because the political reforms followed a more or less clear blueprint in establishing democratic institutions and structures of market economy. Consequently it was not difficult to identify what new societal challenges were provided and for whom. Second, there was the expectation that changes in behaviour and development would happen rather quickly, although with hindsight, this expectation was unrealistic and often invalidated by experience, as research on acculturation among immigrants should have predicted (e.g., Birman & Trickett, 2001). However, this was only the case for the everyday pragmatics of life and not for attitudes and behaviours belonging to values that developed over the decades, such as the distribution of responsibility between the state and the individuals for one's welfare. Hence, differences in attitudes towards the welfare state have tended to persist between East and West Germany, with higher expectations for state action in the East (Alesina & Fuchs-Schündeln, 2007). Taken together, both aspects encouraged research comparing cohorts from East and West, basically without a reference to the possibly large interindividual differences in the degree to which people were actually affected by societal change. This also implicated the risk of falling victim to the ecological fallacy, whereby differences in the prevalence of behaviour between the contexts are seen as consequences of different individual actions. This risk has to be taken seriously where the individual level was neither measured nor were other explanations ruled out, such as differences in the population composition independent of the divergent political and economic systems. In this vein the wide-spread East German pattern of parenthood before marriage turned out to be a manifestation of a traditional North-South divide in Europe, more related to religious traditions (protestant versus catholic) and diverging welfare models than to communist rule (Nauck, 1993). At any rate, the political and economic change of the 1990s and the subsequent transformation of societies demarcates a new deal in research on the role of multilayered contexts in human behaviour and development, and this is the backdrop of the research reported in this section of the Special Issue.

Traditionally, social change on the macro-level was not a prominent topic of research on human development. With the breakdown of the socialist order subsequent to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the psychological consequences of such transitions gained interest and a series of studies was launched (for an overview, see Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2004). These studies characteristically compared same-aged cohorts at different points of the political transition, but did not assess differences in the level to which individuals were personally affected by social and political change. More recently, such endeavours have addressed the ongoing transformation of societies under the influence of globalization that overlaid the effects of the political transitions. Examples are studies of the linkage between such macro changes and individual adaptation in

Germany (e.g., Pinqart & Silbereisen, 2008; Pinquart, Silbereisen, & Körner, 2009), Poland (e.g., Okulicz-Kozaryn & Borucka, 2008), the Baltics (e.g., Titma & Tuma, 2005), and also Russia (e.g., Shteyn, Schumm, Vodopianova, Hobfall, & Lilly, 2003): All these countries look back to a more or less radical break with the political past. Other countries, such as China, reformed their economic system quite comprehensively, albeit with minor political adaptations. Nevertheless, the change of the contexts for human development was profound. On closer examination, although perhaps addressing less dramatic changes on the macro level, there is also a tradition of cohort comparisons in the United Kingdom, revealing the effects of changes in economic prosperity and political priorities over the last decades (Ferri, Bynner, & Wadsworth, 2006; Schoon, 2006).

Taken together, we now know that there is a clear linkage between macro changes at the societal level and individual behaviour, and we also know that the processes establishing this linkage were modelled by a number of contemporary researchers in a way that is reminiscent of the landmark work by Glen H. Elder concerning how families responded to economic hardships during the Great Depression in the late 1920s (Elder, 1974). We invited some of these researchers to present their concepts and results during an international expert conference on "Transitions and Transformations: Trajectories of Social, Economic and Political Change after Communism" held in Jena, July 2-3, 2009. This Special Issue is a product of that conference and this section of it represents a collection of psychological approaches to social change. The contributions are, on the one hand, diverse in terms of countries, samples, design, and variables, but on the other hand, they all share the notion of the interaction between changing contexts and changing individuals, or, in other words, between social structure and human agency. In the remainder of this article we will present a general framework for the study of structure and agency and then locate each of the other contributions within this general framework. Finally, we will attempt to integrate the findings presented in this special issue and discuss their implications for future research, application and social policy.

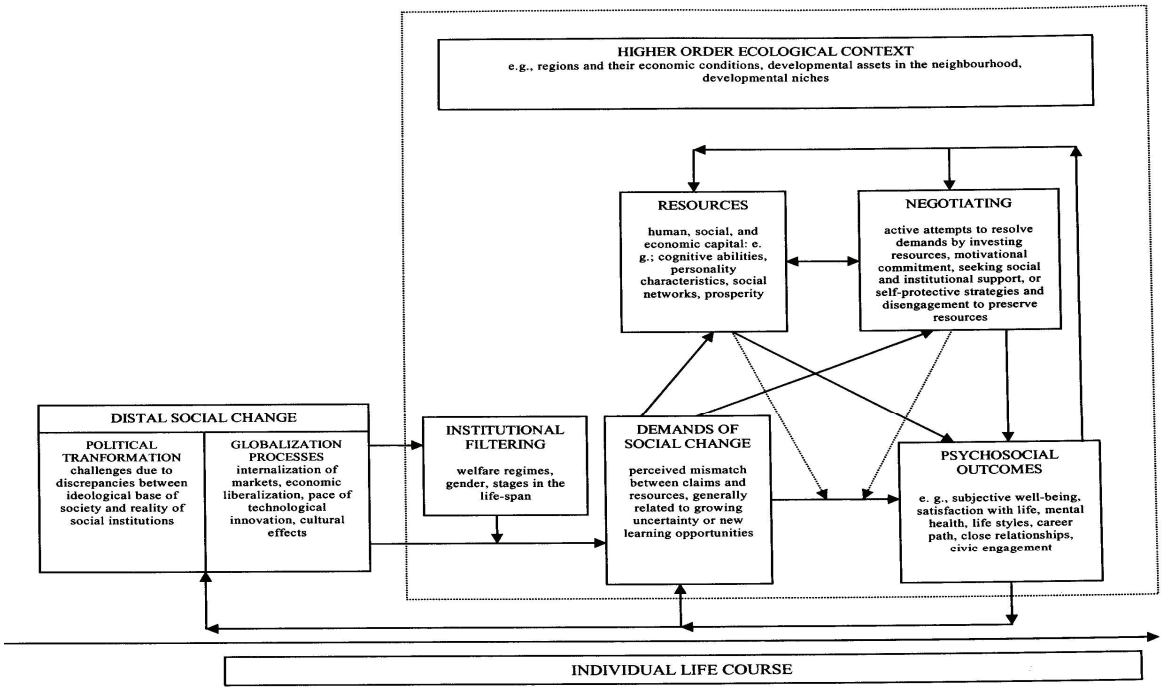
The Jena Model of Social Change and Human Development

The Jena model of social change and human development (for details, see Silbereisen & Pinquart, 2004, 2008; Silbereisen, Pinquart, & Tomasik, 2010) was developed as a general framework to understand how individuals negotiate social change. The model, depicted in Figure 1, builds on research in the stress and coping tradition, but is more specific in at least three aspects. First, all the processes and outcomes are embedded in and influenced by the various developmental contexts as distinguished by Bronfenbrenner (1979). These contexts carry change from the macro level through micro contexts and their interactions through to the individual. Along this cascade, we find culture-typical

"filters" that protect individuals from the manifestations of social change, such as welfare regimes (Hofäcker, Buchholz, & Blossfeld, 2010). Second, demands on individuals are at the core of the model and represent the new claims arising from the changes at the social level and their manifestation in the various contexts. A case in point for demands is the economic hardships studied by Elder (1974), but the Jena model is less specific and more open to a broader portfolio of demands resulting from social change. In the language of stress models, demands represent the primary appraisals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and are the starting point for coping processes, be it problem-oriented behaviours or emotion-focused cognitions. Third, the Jena model assumes that the outcomes of being confronted with social change are manifold and comprise, in principle, all aspects of successful development, such as developing competencies and forming an identity based on achievement in the major domains of life, enjoying psychological well-being, and contributing to society in terms of civic engagement. Furthermore, social change does not affect the outcomes directly but is mediated through and moderated by individual and social resources, as well as the coping processes mentioned. However, the Jena model allows the direct feedback of individual outcomes on all other aspects that make the negotiation of social change a dynamic and interactive process.

There are several reasons why we have introduced the Jena Model in the context of the present Special Issue. First of all, the model allows each contribution to be located within the more general topic of social change and individual adaptation, whereby it is possible not only to identify the uniqueness of each contribution but also to determine conceptual and empirical overlaps. This helps to produce cumulative evidence for an overall result and, as a matter of fact, invitations to the conference were partly guided by the idea to have all parts of the model represented in the contributions and to obtain enough conceptual and empirical overlap. The single contributions in this special issue, therefore, not only stand alone as excellent pieces of scientific inquiry but also emphasize the utility of the Jena model. This is the focus of the following discussion.

Figure 1: The Jena Model of Social Change and Human Development.



Studies on Social Change against the Backdrop of the Jena Model

The papers by Bynner (this volume) and Schoon (this volume) are special because they leave the inner regulation part of the model shown in Figure 1 virtually untouched as far as data are concerned. Naturally, they address highly relevant psychosocial outcomes concerning young people during their initiation years in early adulthood and have, of course, concepts on the interpretative level about how these behaviours come about vis-à-vis the challenges they address. The paper by Schoon utilizes the comparison of three large cohort studies in the United Kingdom to assess indirectly a change in the societal conditions of growing up into middle adolescence. The 1958 cohort represents the former times of becoming adolescent during post-war prosperity, the 1970 cohort is characterized by reaching the traditional end of compulsory schooling at the height of an economic recession (for details, see Ferri, Bynner, & Wadsworth, 2006; Schoon, 2006), and the 1990 cohort faces the current down-turn of the economy due to the financial crisis on world markets. The psycho-social outcome of interest is educational expectations related to whether one wants to attend school for more years than mandatory, and of course changes in this outcome are conceived as a reflection of the changing labour market, itself influenced by the broader changes in economy and technology characteristic of the times. The conceptual framework used by Schoon thus addresses various propositions put forward by Elder (1998), to whom she repeatedly refers. She considers that the life course is socially structured by institutionalized rules and normative prescriptions and that these structures are prone to historical change, which in turn shapes the pathways for individual agency.

Although this research is rather mute concerning the regulation part of the model, personal resources are addressed from a life course perspective in the form of prior academic attainment in late childhood, and the role of parental educational level is analyzed as a proxy context in which negotiating the new challenges takes place. These new challenges can be described by their modal characteristic as, for instance, differences in the economic statistics for the cohorts, changes in the institutional arrangements concerning schooling and occupational training, or legislation concerning parents' responsibility for their children's education. Interestingly, the latter did not change over the decades covered by this study. Nevertheless, the main result reported in the paper is that, on average, children expressed aspirations to stay longer in secondary school than had been usual in the past, thereby responding to the increased qualification requirements in the labour markets. In addition, it is worth noting that the analyses also lead to the view that some likely regulation mechanisms, such as school motivation, declined in their importance for expectations to maintain full-time schooling.

John Bynner was formerly in charge of the British cohort studies (and like Ingrid Schoon is an example of psychologist who joined sociology in studying the individual level processes related to social change), but the paper presented here utilizes another way of addressing the influence of social change. The method selected uses a comparative design representing different periods of the presumed large scale changes. In this way, rather than comparing cohorts within a country, he reports about a research endeavour where various regions within the UK and Germany are compared after carefully matching not only the economic fate of the regions but also the individuals according to their occupational and career trajectories. The concept was to compare two nations with similar challenges at about the same time historically. These challenges could be called the consequences of globalization, that is, requirements to change the training by which young people achieved the higher qualifications they needed compared to those of the past. In this regard, the topic is similar to what Schoon (this volume) addressed, but Bynner (this volume) brings in a new twist reminiscent of what is called institutional filtering in Figure 1. The two societies went into the time of globalization with their established systems of occupational training, namely, on the job work experience in the UK, and the dual system, which comprised occupational skills training in a work context and vocational schooling, in Germany. Over time both systems had to adapt – in the UK a more instruction-oriented scheme was established, and in Germany the traditional dual system had to be amended by establishing training firms, because one of the consequences of globalization was that the small firms could no longer afford to provide places for trainees. Nevertheless, in spite of similar challenges on the economic level (and the role of within-country differences in this regard was weak), the results were different between the countries, thereby reflecting the role of the institutional filters. Whereas in Germany the socialization into civic responsibilities was higher, in the UK it was the level of employment confidence that exceeded that in Germany. The latter probably reflected the higher flexibility of labour markets in the UK, whereas the higher interest among Germans in civic life was not only a manifestation of a broader scope in schooling, but also of the role of structured work experiences in responsibility and informed decision making. Interestingly enough, the type of career ladder people had embarked on (such as a professional level compared to a mere experience in unskilled jobs) was a major source of the differences mentioned, beyond country differences. In terms of social policies, the push of social change resulted in a convergence of some aspects of the systems and rules of occupational education and training between the two countries.

In sum, John Bynner and Ingrid Schoon model social change by comparing different macro contexts; the United Kingdom and Germany on the one hand, and different cohorts within the United Kingdom on the other. In both cases, changes on the macro level are tracked down to important life-course decisions and trajectories, all covered by the topic of establishing oneself in work and

building a career. Concerning our model, these two contributions address changes on the macro level, as well as within more proximal contexts, and refer to outcomes various. They do not, however, focus chiefly on the many ways in which individuals process the challenges.

The studies reported by Kim, Ng and Kim (this volume) come closer to the challenge-demand aspect of the model. He investigated convenience samples from Seoul in South Korea and replicated the research with a similar sample from Hong Kong. These national contexts were chosen because of the dramatic economic and political changes that took place during the late 1990s. The average national income in Korea dropped by 40% in 1998 during the first recession in the 40 year old history of the country. People felt insecure because the unemployment rate suddenly doubled and was accompanied by a restructuring of the economy due to rapid technological change. In Hong Kong, the end of British rule was also paralleled by economic recession and overlaid by uneasiness about the political future of the former colony in general. Against this backdrop of objective challenges, Kim and colleagues asked participants to think of distinct instances of social change that came to their mind and then to provide their subjective evaluation concerning the scope or extent of these changes, the pace by which each change happened, and whether they deemed the changes to be desirable. A major finding was that, in both regions studied, faster pace and larger scope of instances of social change were associated with negative evaluations that, in turn, corresponded to lower well-being. The instances of social change mentioned by participants could be organized into five groups (politics, economy, health and welfare, technology, and crime), which were also identified in pre-tests; of those instances mentioned by more than half of the sample, all referred to change for the worse. It is important to note that participants were asked about events that affected "our society", and thus they were not conceived as demands impacting the particular individuals as our model shown in Figure 1 presumes (see also Tomasik & Silbereisen, 2009). As is revealed in public opinion surveys, people often claim that the situation is bad for other people or the society in its entirety, but attitude to their own plight is much more positive. Seen against this backdrop, the notion put forward by Kim and colleagues that the associations between perceived changes and well-being can be conceived as a case of the diathesis-stress approach raises some questions, but nevertheless these studies exemplify the assessment of the subjective manifestation of macro changes. It also shows that there is a more or less broad pattern of interrelated changes typical of a situation of economic threat and political unrest, and that spontaneous comments mainly refer to negatively evaluated changes.

Compared to the other studies reported in this selection, the sample sizes were small and, most importantly, the design was not longitudinal. This is very different in the research Kagitcibasi (this volume) addresses in her paper. From the title it refers to international immigration of Turkish youth, but the conclu-

sions and recommendations actually are based on a combined longitudinal and intervention study concerning the changes in life style accompanying rural-urban internal migration in a developing country, namely Turkey. Reflecting the traditional state of economy and welfare in rural areas of Turkey, people live within a family model of interdependence, meaning that the family or the collective is the main point of reference, and whereby the young are socialized in a way to benefit the family rather than with a view to what in more developed Western societies would be called individual autonomy. A major pivot for this traditional orientation is the fact that the value of children lies, among other things, in the provision of welfare for parents once they are old, so that the interdependent family type is part of the cultural safeguarding. In a changing society like Turkey, such an orientation is also an obstacle to success in the knowledge society of our times. Consequently, a culture of psychological/emotional interdependence, which features an autonomous-relational self and thereby combining the relatedness to the family as a still relevant asset with the personal autonomy so much required in a knowledge society, evolved rather rapidly in urban centres. Kagitcibasi investigated this by a controlled intervention with children in pre-school age and their mothers, who in the experimental condition received information and training in child rearing styles, which stressed the combination of relatedness and autonomy, and in cognitive skills required for schooling. The results over about 20 years were remarkable, revealing a higher economic and career success among rural to urban migrant samples in the experimental condition as compared to the control group.

This line of research was chosen for our section of this Special Issue because it exemplifies the cascading effects of social change through the manifold contexts associated with the family and child rearing. The goals pursued in daily interaction with offspring are a manifestation of a cultural value system within the macro context that becomes challenged through economic modernization and the gradual building of an extended welfare state. Once the family's offspring is no longer required to provide security for the parent generation, because a family-independent system of welfare based on earnings becomes established, material interdependence in the form of a close-knit family system is no longer instrumental for the welfare of the aging parents. This change leads to the need for skill development and motivation for individual responsibility and autonomy in decision making in the future work place and beyond. In other words, without an understanding of the changing role of institutional filters as depicted in Figure 1, and without a grasp of the many interacting intermediate contexts and their gradual change (like kindergarten, school and occupational training schemes), it would be difficult to understand that the precipitation of social change on the macro level sometimes takes many generations, and sometimes it even occurs within a decade or less. The latter is exemplified by the rapid change in socialization goals among Chinese mothers in urban centres

that Chen and colleagues report (e.g., Chen, Cen, Li, & He, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2010).

Kagitcibasi (this volume; but see Kagitcibasi, 2007, chap. 5) did not discuss explicitly the actual processes on the family level that may have lead people to change their mindset (although she believes that a major mechanism is internal or international migration in the case of developing countries). According to the Jena Model this is the core of the explanation of changes in individual behaviour, and such family processes are addressed in the paper by Conger, Schofield, Conger and Neppl (this volume). The case in point is economic hardship as a consequence of changes in the world of finance that is investigated in a longitudinal study covering three generations. The circumstances in rural Iowa in the USA, where these people were raised and live, were characterized by a rather rapid deterioration of the local economy, exaggerated by difficulties in receiving loans for farm operations around 1990. Explicitly relying on Elder's approach to the economic crises in the late 1920s (Elder, 1974), a cascade of several steps concerning how families try to make ends meet in spite of serious hardship is delineated. In the language of our model, as depicted in Figure 1, demands refer to the lack of financial resources for maintaining established family routines, and the various responses meant to close the gap between claims and resources are instances of regulation mechanisms. These responses can be spelled out very specifically due to the circumscribed topic and include, for instance, reducing spending on health care. Note, however, that such hardship represents just one of the many changes for the worse that Kim and colleagues (this volume) have identified as salient for the participants in their studies. The interplay with resources was also analyzed, with a certain type of personality as the main personal resource. The target variable is the developmentally instigative behaviours of the young children (the G3 generation), and the antecedent to this is G2 parental investments that were hampered by the economic strains. The fact that proximal contexts affected by social change also play a role according to the model in Figure 1 is revealed by the influence of G 1 (grandparents) parental investments that themselves were hit by an economic downturn some 20 years earlier. Some of the outcome variables addressed among the G 3 children, such as attachment to parents, are known to exert a long-ranging influence on their development in the years to come. Rand Conger takes parental response to economic challenges as a particular mediating variable and addresses the dynamic interplay across generations within families over a twenty year period. Social and political change, as addressed in the other papers, is not a particular focus here, but the paper is strong in the often overlooked consequences of individual (or maybe dyadic) agency for developmental outcomes in one's offspring. Seen against our Jena model, this contribution is also concerned with the personal resources aspect of individuals' dealing with challenges, and with what happens to these personal resources during the process.

Integration and Outlook for the Future

In spite of the obvious differences in topic and location, the papers assembled for this special issue provide a number of important lessons for research on social change. First, whether one is interested in a circumscribed phenomenon, such as the perception of the scope and pace of social change or in the full cascade of effects in outcomes in dealing with economic hardships, one always needs to bear in mind the larger historical context. Or, as Winston Churchill once said, "The further backward you look, the further forward you see". In this spirit, the educational expectations of more recent cohorts in the United Kingdom cannot be fully understood without the fate of earlier cohorts representing the parent generation. Whether a rapid political hiatus characterized the situation or a more gradual shift of the economic circumstances took place, the multiple layers of public and private contexts affected need to be addressed. Research on the psychological consequences of social change has to be multidisciplinary because only in this way can all the relevant changes on the macro level and their manifestations on more proximal contexts be considered.

Second, obviously researchers need to find a balance between the impossible aim of identifying and assessing all the intermediate processes delineated by the Jena Model of Social Change and Human Development (see Figure 1), and a simple comparison of cohorts representing the macro contexts, but without addressing its particular relevance for the individuals studied. Seen against the backdrop of the studies selected, there are a number of ways to achieve a balance. Some compare cohorts. but the historical periods chosen are special with regard to the outcomes of interest. Thus, when interested in the educational expectations of young people in mid-adolescence, the cohorts compared not only represent differences in economic prosperity, but also reflect the results of political action that changed the constraints for school education and occupational training. Although the particular circumstances that lead to such an expectation were not assessed, the specificity and relevance of the cohorts chosen makes it likely that cohort differences in educational expectations can plausibly be traced back to changes on the societal level. Obviously, this rationale does not necessarily apply to other possible changes on the individual level, particularly if the cohorts studied are not representative of the social structures one aims to compare.

Instead of (or in addition to) comparing different cohorts, other researchers bring in assessments of various manifestations of social change as perceived by the participants. Although the broader societal context is also addressed, like in the comparison by Kim and colleagues (this volume) of the Korean capital with Hong Kong at about the same period of economic and political uncertainty, there is no need for a match between the target outcome and what is represented by the country comparison at a specific point in history. It is not the samples as such that represent the emergence of social change. Rather it is the

interindividual differences in the perceptions by the participants. Not surprisingly, this rationale of research is represented by rather small samples compared to the large sample of birth cohorts – and the antecedent variable of interest is represented in differences within rather than differences between samples.

Third, all studies in this section of the Special Issue show additional efforts to get closer to the intricate web of macro-micro influences, closer than the main research strategy or design as such allows. In the Anglo-German comparisons, Bynner (this volume) reports that the survey-type research they employed was amended by qualitative studies of selected cases where researchers learned from participants' "own voice" about the role of individual biography that could not be addressed in the main study (for details, see Evans & Heinz, 1994). In the study by Conger and colleagues (this volume) the qualitative is aggregated in the quantitative, so to speak, as the quantitative indices are in part based on extensive, more qualitative, observations of interactions among those affected by the social change under scrutiny. In addition to methodological amendments, there are also many attempts to enrich analyses by referring to conceptual models, in spite of the fact that only a glimpse of what the model actually requires to address is assessed. When comparing the paper by Kim and colleagues (this volume) with the paper by Conger and colleagues, it is obvious that the latter spells out the response cascade to economic hardship, whereas the former conceptually refers to stress models, but in the end only assessed resources as potential moderators of the link. Nevertheless, both papers come closer to the web of influences shown in Figure 1, and in terms of addressing the changing macro context, the comparison of Korea and Hong Kong offers rich insights.

Fourth, given the complexity of the topic, cross-validation of the insights by planned replication and variation of designs is of particular importance. As Bynner (this volume) reports, the Anglo-German comparisons were actually an off-shoot of a former UK study that aimed at a better understanding of the consequences of a new occupational training regime meant to overcome the mismatch between skills gained in work and the growing qualification needs of an emerging knowledge society. Here the German apprenticeship model seemed to represent a benchmark, although eventually it revealed problems of its own. Cross-country comparisons are one way to study social change but as Kagitcibasi (this volume) shows, within-country comparisons are as illuminating. Particularly in less-industrialized countries, the rural-urban dimension represents different periods in the diffusion of social change. Taking changing value orientations in Turkey as a case in point, Kagitcibasi showed that early intervention programs helped mothers and the young to take more quickly to the pattern of psychological interdependence in intergenerational relations that is an adaptation of traditional values to the modernization required in Turkish society. Similar within-country comparisons were used in the research reported

by Bynner, in this case to represent upswing and downturn in economic prosperity of regions and its individual level consequences.

Fifth, the research taken together obviously has relevance for the formation of social policies. However, one has to bear in mind that research results as such, even if gathered as instances of applied science, are just one among many inputs for social policy and intervention planning (Shonkoff, 2000). Nevertheless, a number of excellent examples of influencing policy are represented. Kagitcibasi (this volume) was able to demonstrate positive gains for those children whose mothers took part in structured experiences of how to develop autonomy within psychological interdependence and how to foster school-like cognitive skills. In adulthood, i.e. two decades later, these children were definitely more successful in life as evinced by status attainment and economic thriving. A consequence was the country-wide implementation of a nationwide early childhood education program that was also aired on TV and implemented in other countries including those with Turkish minorities. And not surprisingly Cigdem Kagitcibasi herself became a proponent of promoting psychological interdependence rather than the prevalent individualism that resulted in a loss of social cohesion and connection in Western countries. Moreover, in this regard some of the immigrant and ethnic minorities in these countries (when properly supported in their integration) could provide positive models and benign influences in this regard.

There are other examples for the positive influence of research on social policies, such as the one reported by Bynner (this volume) on the reform of the former Youth Training Scheme in the UK. This now represents an attractive mix between the traditional British work socialization model and the German model of a combination of practical training and school, thereby socializing youth for roles in work and civic society at the same time. Studies like the one reported by Schoon (this volume) will certainly have an impact on social policies because they bring into perspective the size of cohort-related differences to differences within a cohort. The extension of teenagers' educational expectations, for instance, seems to be relatively independent of earlier school attainment, and this appears to have become a norm. The question here, however, is whether a society can afford not to increase the age through which parents are obliged to fund further education of their children.

Sixth, the studies on social change and human adaptation and development not only represent an enrichment of scientific enquiry in this field, but also promote theorizing about the paradigm of development-in-context (Silbereisen et al., 1986) in general. Psychosocial development occurs in the transaction between person and contexts, but in many research designs, at best only proximal contexts were addressed, not the more remote contexts, and especially not the interplay among the various levels from macro to micro. Admittedly the complexities shown in Figure 1 cannot be addressed in a single study, but some of the research reported goes far beyond what would usually be expected. Con-

ger and colleagues (this volume), for instance, do not shy away from dealing with the intricate question of causation versus selection. Obviously, to see changes in parents' investments as a consequence of the attempts to deal with economic hardship is a sound assumption. Nevertheless, this causation view can be challenged by a selection hypothesis that holds the particularities of parental investments and exposure to economic hardships to be influenced by a third variable, of which personality differences are a major suspect. Recent research has demonstrated how early differences in basic dimensions of personality can exert an influence over decades by the accumulation of small effects in ever new environments and developmental tasks along the life-span (e.g., Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2000; Wiesner, Vondracek, Capaldi, & Porfeli, 2003). Conger and colleagues controlled for a particular pattern of agentic personality and found that there was indeed a selection effect (exposure to hardships and less adequate parenting investments were both related to personality), but the causation effect (investments were affected by how people dealt with the hardships) stayed intact. This approach, at the first glance, shows the relevance of personal resources as depicted in Figure 1. However, it goes far beyond this by demonstrating how one can investigate whether exposure to an instance of social change can differ across the sample studied, and whether this selection effect in the extreme may explain what otherwise would be misrepresented as an adaptation to the demands of economic hardship (Shanahan & Hood, 2000).

Seventh, although this approach implicitly addresses the likelihood that individuals actually are the producers of the challenges and demands they have to deal with, this is not to be confused with the more general question that the psychosocial outcomes themselves may be the antecedents of changes on the society level. An example would be the promotion of collective action, such as civic engagement as a consequence of dealing with, for instance, economic hardship. As we know from our own research, this is not very likely to happen, as people faced with negative challenges of social change do not tend to respond by caring for others (Silbereisen, Tomasik, & Grümer, 2008). Nevertheless, the ultimate interest in research on social change is to study the "mechanisms" that bring about the connection from macro to micro and back from micro to macro (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996). There seem to be two rather unrelated research traditions; one concentrating on social change in terms of top-down effects, the other focusing on bottom-up effects, as in social movements arising from the responses of individuals. The studies assembled here obviously belong to the former tradition, but as a group they are characterized by a rather elaborate examination of the macro and micro aspects of life and development in rapidly changing times. Although the potential for the promotion of social change is not explicitly mentioned, it is obvious that comprehensive change in the association between educational attainment and educational expectations can lead to a dead end, because not all can achieve what they want

irrespective of their past achievements. Alternatively, society-wide measures may be undertaken with the aim of a better alignment between the need for higher qualification and better learning opportunities for those less-well equipped with resources. In this regard, the example of social policies resulting from Kagitcibasi's (this volume) research is really impressive.

Given that this Special Issue is a product of an international conference on the transformation processes in European societies after 1989, the reader may be surprised that actually none of the projects (except for Bynner, this volume) addresses German unification and its aftermath for individual development in detail. This omission is no oversight but by design. We in Jena conducted such research within the Collaborative Research Center 580 (which hosted the international conference) but we wanted to learn from like-minded researchers from elsewhere. The common denominator of the contributions and our own research is an interest in the role of individual adaptation and development in providing the link from and to current changes on the structural level of societies. It is our hope that knowledge resulting from such research will, in the longer run, not only allow us to analyze the situation of societies under the pressure of change and its role in individual adaptation and development, but also to show how to manage such demands in everyday life, and to give advice to those who are in charge of social policy design.

This is more ambitious than it seems since one has to bear in mind an apparent paradox of reactions to social change. In situations characterized by growing ambiguity, uncertainty, and unpredictability, most people tend to "accentuate" their pre-existing behavioural and developmental orientations rather than change to the unclear requirements of the new societal priorities. This tendency can be explained by the concepts of personality continuity and principles involved in decision making. At any rate, to rely on past behaviours seems to represent a rational choice (Elder & Caspi, 1990). Thus, the challenge of social change in general, and political transitions and transformations in particular, is to overcome a conservative response pattern by giving a clear picture of new expectations, certainty about how to implement new behaviours, and predictability of outcomes in spite of macro change. This is the duty of politics and policies, but psychological research can help in resolving the paradox by analyzing the individual-level conditions.

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